Release of Natural Gas Supplies for Urea Industry

3994. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS & FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has demanded release of natural gas supplies for the urea industry to boost domestic production and reduce the country's dependence on imports;

(b) if so, whether he has taken-up the issue with the Petroleum Ministry and also with the Prime Minister;

(c) if so, whether Government have prepared any action plan to bridge the curren: gap between production and demand of urea in the country during 1996-97; and

(d) if so, what is the total gap between demand and supply of urea a! present and the action proposed by Govrenment to bridge the gap?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS & FERTILIZERS (SHRI SHEES RAM OLA): (a) and (b) As the demand for natural gas exceeds the availability, the allocations for the consumer industries, including fertilizer plants and projects, are periodically determined through institutionalised inter-ministerial consultations.

(c) and (d) The policy of the Government is to maximise the production of urea based on the utilisation of indigenous feedstocks. The role of imports in the overall supply planning is esentially residual, aimed at providing a reasonable cushion against fluctuations in the demand on the one hand, and on the other hand, taking advantage of the global demand-supply situation for sourcing the material at competitive prices.

It is not possible to indicate the level of imports of urea expected during 1996-97, as it would depend on a variety of factors, such as trends of indigenous production and consumption of nitrogen bearing fertilizers, behaviour of prices in the international market and global demand and supply equation.

Female Infanticide

3995. SHRl IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the widespread practice of female infanticide in different States of the country; and

(b) if so, the concrete steps taken by Government to curb this malpractice?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI): (a) Yes, Sir. The evil practice of female infanticide is reportedly practiced amongst a few communities in certain parts of the country.

(b) Infanticide is a crime under the Indian Penal Code. The persons found involved in such acts are proceeded against under the law. The Central Government has also enacted the Pre-natal natal Diognostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 to curb the misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for determination of the sex of the foetus leading to female foeticide. Besides, various programmes of action and advocacy are being implemented by the Government in the country for the welfare and development of women and the girl child. Attempts are also being made to project a positive images of the girl child so as to bring about changes in societal attitudes towards them. The Government has also initiated a media campaign to generate awareness on various issues relating to the girl child. A National Plan of Action for the SAARC Decade (1991—2000 A.D.) for the Gir! Child focussing on survival, protection and development of the girl child has been formulated. A special set of interventions for adolescent girls has been institutionalised through the Integrated